

Tips for specifying multifamily

When it comes to specifying multifamily properties, communicate early and communicate often. Just ask Ashley Gonzales, Allegion specification consultant, and Stephen Richardson, Allegion project coordinator. Both have been involved in several multifamily properties and agree that getting everyone involved early is essential.

Collaboration from the beginning of a project is critical. There are so many partners in these types of properties, from the security consultants that oversee electronic access control to developers to architects to hardware suppliers. All of these individuals need to communicate to be on the same page, or things can go wrong quickly, according to Gonzales. This includes getting parties aligned on the budget.

This is imperative for the specification consultants to know upfront to ensure they are specifying door hardware that meets the needs of the facility within appropriate financial parameters. If the budget won't allow for it, the specification won't be used or it will be changed, resulting in wasted time.

“Getting all parties aligned on the direction is how everyone wins and the property owner gets a project that meets requirements and is within budget,” said Richardson.

Differentiating between openings

“As hardware specification writers, we are drilled into thinking through every opening according to the DHI sequence of hanging the door, securing it, control it and protecting it,” explained Richardson. “A lot of that gets thrown out the door in multifamily properties, where budget is typically the driving factor around hardware. In commercial buildings where things get used and abused a lot, doors, frames and hardware need all the protection they can get. There is usually a facilities team that maintains the openings, so the less work they have to do,

the better. In multifamily, many look at door hardware as a commodity. If the lockset breaks, they buy a new lockset. They aren't repairing, just replacing.”

Openings to common spaces tend to differ. Richardson adds that these areas are where developers want something that's a little nicer—something that is more stylish or functional. Electronic access control and elegant door pulls are frequently used in shared spaces. These areas see more abuse than residences as they are cycled more frequently by more people. Resident unit entries are another type of opening where higher quality hardware is specified as these can be big selling points for future tenants.

“Residents are looking for high-tech options and using a cell phone or fob is a definite selling point. Developers are looking for anything that looks cool, high-tech or futuristic to give potential renters peace of mind that the property is better than the one down the road.”

– Stephen Richardson

Electronic access control has grown in popularity, especially in multifamily and mixed-use properties. Credentials enhance convenience, allowing residents to access several areas of a property using one card or their mobile device. They also enhance security and offer many efficiencies for property managers. But with electronic access control comes the task of managing the database.

“It's important to understand how the building owner plans to manage the property from an access control standpoint,” said Richardson. Gonzales agrees—and adds that it's important to get the access control team involved as early as possible. Incorporating electronic access control, as well as planning for the systems to manage it, shouldn't be an afterthought.

Understanding mixed-use

Commercial and residential collide in mixed-use properties, presenting unique security and safety demands for specification consultants. They must balance securing the perimeter and multiple points of entry while allowing for egress. And it's key to understand the dividing line between commercial areas and resident-only spaces.

"In a high-rise building with a hotel and resident units, we need to know how people will access the building," explained Richardson. "How will residents use the spaces? How will hotel guests use the spaces? And how does the common person walking in get around? There is more security involved."

Stairwells, for example, need secured with access control—but in a way that allows for stairwell re-entry. Additionally, keying needs to be considered. While security is needed, flow control from one space to the next should be as seamless as possible. And as one moves throughout the building, consistency of aesthetic is ideal. Suiting all of the door hardware together needs to be considered. Of course, all of this needs to be executed in a way that adheres to the proper building codes.

Navigating codes

Different floors of these properties serve multiple purposes and, therefore, must adhere to different codes. "Different floors fall into different codes because of occupancy loads," said Gonzales. "You might have business occupancy on the second floor but residential on the third floor."

Codes can be confusing to navigate. Even in multifamily, codes often change and vary by region.

"California has particular things that must be included, like levers that return within one-half inch of the face of the door. We don't have that in Texas, but we are required to provide a single-sided deadbolt for privacy. Florida and the Gulf Coast must have exterior hardware rated for windstorms."

Gonzales and Richardson recommend involving specification consultants like Allegion's team of experts. They can identify fire and life safety and security concerns to help avoid issues that might occur.

Allegion has a team of more than 150 specification writers located around the world who would be happy to assist on your next project. [Contact an Allegion specification writer](#), or check out the [iDig Hardware blog](#) for information and updates on door hardware codes.

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012147, Rev. 03/18
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